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Special Issue on

CLIL IMPLEMENTATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXTS: EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Volume Two

Introduction

Eleni Griva and Angeliki Deligianni

The second Volume of RPLT special issue includes a number of CLIL projects implemented and researched in the Greek educational context. Dedicated language teachers from both primary and secondary education share their experience of CLIL projects, designed on the basis of the demands of their own educational/teaching settings. The contributors present CLIL implementations in diverse populations in both primary and secondary education and discuss the specificities of CLIL classroom practices in relation to diverse populations and settings. These separate cases of flexible CLIL project experimentation constitute a source of relevant experience to be considered as the precursor of official CLIL introduction. It is for this reason that this volume also includes teachers' reflections on their CLIL experience, in section entitled "*Episodes in CLIL Arena*".

The volume provides space for researchers and practitioners to present their efforts on studies which offer insights into the practical challenges that might be encountered in implementing CLIL projects. The authors maintain that CLIL instruction should be expanded in the Greek educational context, and good CLIL practices should be developed. Additionally, they highlight their need for training in CLIL approach to acquire and develop the competences required.

The second Volume of RPLTL special issue on CLIL has been organized in two sections as follows:

Section one: Implementing CLIL projects in Primary and Secondary Education

This section comprises a selection of ten papers with the aim to demonstrate that expertise in CLIL does exist in the Greek educational context although this approach has not been officially introduced in Greece. A growing number of teachers, either EFL teachers or teams of EFL and subject teachers in secondary education or EFL and general education teachers in primary schools, can and decide to support innovative CLIL practices in the Greek education system with positive results regarding both language acquisition and content learning in CLIL classrooms.

Section One has been organized into the following two *subsections* related to CLIL projects in mainstream primary and secondary education.

Subsection One comprises four articles that focus on introducing CLIL projects in primary education settings, where teachers used English as a foreign language (EFL) as the vehicle to teach content.

In the first paper of *Subsection One* entitled “CLIL in Primary Education: promoting multicultural citizenship awareness in the foreign language classroom”, Eleni Griva and Dora Chostelidou present a CLIL project that was designed to increase students’ awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity and develop awareness of self and other along with raising their interest in ‘otherness’. The experimental project was piloted for 6th grade students at a primary school, in northern Greece. The evaluation of the study indicated the positive effect of CLIL on students’ foreign language (FL) skills development along with significantly enhanced multicultural citizenship awareness.

The second paper: “The case for Geography through CLIL: Exploring the linguistic and intercultural potential in Thrace”, authored by Georgia Kosma and Nelly Zafeiriades, views CLIL as a highly dynamic alternative to current mainstream teaching practices and a challenging approach. It focuses on a lesson plan detailed analysis, thus justifying its main argument that CLIL has a role to play in shaping future flexible, enriching and empowering multifaceted language learning and content learning experiences alike into current multilingual /multicultural contexts.

In about the same line, Eleni Korosidou and Angeliki Deligianni, in their paper: “Let me introduce you to Crete’: A CLIL project in the English as a foreign language classroom”, present a CLIL project which was piloted in a 6th grade classroom of a Greek primary school, focusing on Cretan history and culture. Language learning was integrated with the subjects of Geography, History Culture and Art. The findings indicated students’ improvement regarding both their receptive and productive skills in the target language, the development of children’s cultural awareness as well as their sensitivity and respect towards local history.

In the last paper entitled “Physical education through CLIL: teaching movement vocabulary to young learners”, Kyriaki Emmanouilidou and Chryssa Laskaridou present a CLIL programme, where a part of the ‘movement alphabet’ vocabulary of Physical Education (PE) content was taught in a class of Year 2 pupils in a school with an extensive English language curriculum. The PE teacher and the English language teacher were both responsible for the design and implementation of the lessons. The content of the PE syllabus that was chosen, the objectives, the materials and examples of assessment techniques are presented, and the difficulties encountered are discussed.

Subsection Two includes six articles on CLIL implementation in secondary education settings aiming at learning different subject content and developing EFL with both subject-specific and language-specific objectives.

In the first paper of *Subsection Two* “Implementing CLIL in a Greek Secondary school setting: a suggestion for good teaching practices”, Ioanna Kynigou, Eleni Xanthakou, Maria Chionis and Dimitra Dertili describe CLIL method in the setting of a junior high school in Athens, Greece. They present a provisional scheme for informal assessment of CLIL implementation in an attempt to evaluate the possible advantages and disadvantages of the method, both in terms of cognitive as well as linguistic development, as these have emerged from its application. Provisional conclusions are drawn, and suggestions are made for further studies in order to assess the opportunities presented and the obstacles anticipated in the event of a more generalized implementation of the method.

Christine Kalfoglou, in her contribution “On how Content motivates Grammar”, draws on the conception of grammar as a dynamic system that involves thinking, while attempting to show that, within a CLIL context, form can be taught as emerging naturally out of the needs dictated by the specific type of thinking invited by the content selected. She shows it by presenting a CLIL history project implemented with students in a lower secondary education EFL context for an over three-month period in two consecutive years and through tapping learners’ awareness of their grammar benefits.

Mary Marin adopts CLIL approach to teaching poetry in a high school classroom. In her paper entitled “An Integrated Approach to Teaching Poetry in a Greek EFL Classroom. A Case Study: Comparing Cavafy and Shakespeare”, she presents a case study of comparing two seemingly different world renowned poets, William Shakespeare and Constantine Cavafy, implemented to junior high school EFL learners. It was revealed that through a variety of linguistic, methodological and motivational elements, the use of poetry in the language classroom can be a potentially powerful pedagogic tool.

Katerina Vourdanou, in her contribution “Integrating the CLIL approach: Literature and wikis in the Greek EFL classroom as a means of promoting intercultural awareness”, presents a CLIL project carried out in the 3rd grade of a junior high school aiming to investigate the impact of the integration of literature and wikis in the EFL classroom on students’ intercultural awareness. The findings revealed the effect of the literary text on the learners’ intercultural awareness and the significance of integrating intercultural material while combining face-to-face with online instruction in the Greek EFL classroom was reflected. Furthermore, the benefits of applying the CLIL approach in EFL students’ skills were indicated.

Ifigenia Kofou and Kostas Phillipides, in their paper: “Can teaching of forces enforce language learning?”, present a CLIL programme which took place at a senior high school in Thessaloniki aiming at teaching part of the syllabus of Physics in English, more specifically the chapters on forces and Newton’s laws. The formative and summative assessment used in both the experimental and control groups proved that the foreign language did not affect the comprehension of the subject content, while a self-assessment questionnaire indicated that most students of the experimental group developed all language skills.

In the last contribution with the title “A CLIL Model: Teaching Science at Secondary Education”, Kleopatra Kalogerakou, Marianthi Baka and Maria Lountzi present the implementation of CLIL teaching method in Science at a junior high school of Athens. It is

about a small-scale project of a 12-hour module for 1st grade on 'The organization of life' in Biology and a 12-hour module for 2nd grade on 'Consumer Behaviour' in Home Economics. This project belongs to an on-going research project to develop a pedagogical model for CLIL by involving more content areas and more systematic CLIL teaching throughout the school year.

Section Two: Reflecting on CLIL implementation

This section, entitled "*Episodes in CLIL Arena*", includes eight CLIL teacher reflections on their experience from teaching in a CLIL context. One of the most difficult aspects of implementing innovative approaches such as CLIL is the isolation imposed on practitioners. There are few opportunities available to observe and learn from other colleagues' experience. To help fill that void especially with regard to CLIL project design and implementation, eight CLIL teachers reflect on their CLIL experience and provide a general appreciation of their CLIL intervention by discussing the three following issues:

- *Teacher's experience related to CLIL projects*

The teachers discuss on how and when they became involved in CLIL and report problems/challenges/difficulties they encountered. They finally reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of CLIL.

According to their reports, CLIL project was implemented in geography, physics, history and astrology classes, either by the EFL teacher or in collaboration with subject teachers. Emphasis was placed on authentic teaching material and the construction of authentic learning environment. In some of the implemented CLIL projects student learning was supported either by a Moodle-based dynamic learning environment or by using the WebQuest or electronic platforms. It is argued that the variety of CLIL resources available on line can help teachers put together and teach a CLIL course effectively. It also derives that their CLIL experience has offered them the opportunity to become more flexible and resourceful teachers with rewarding results for both the teacher and student. On a final/last note they have been left with a very satisfying and positive feeling.

- *Language Teachers' role in CLIL projects*

In particular, the teachers have to reflect on certain issues such as, what makes an effective CLIL teacher, how he/she copes with his/her needs as a CLIL teacher, whether CLIL context helps students feel safer and gives them the opportunity to make suggestions for preferred lesson structure.

It has been recorded that CLIL teachers realize their role as a facilitator while introducing enjoyable activities away from traditional rather boring teaching material. Flexibility is one of the characteristics of their role and code-switching results as a natural communication strategy.

However it stems that language teachers face the restraint and suspicion on the part of their colleagues and head teachers who have not been informed about CLIL as yet. Not rarely CLIL teachers may be confronted with reactions that come from subject teachers and parents who might worry about the effects of the implementation of an innovative teaching approach such as CLIL. Furthermore, Panayotis Domvros, in his report, expresses his doubts

about the readiness of the Greek educational system in terms of modality and resources to adopt CLIL as a generally accepted practice.

- *Teacher training needs*

This issue seems to be teachers' major concern. As they declare, EFL teachers lack CLIL experience and they are in need of relevant teacher training courses. They also report that they need to do a lot of study to make sure that the content information and knowledge to be taught is appropriate. Their suggestions include the establishment of formal, well organized training and relevant legislation that would set the framework within which teachers could safely initiate and experiment CLIL project implementations. More specifically, they wish to have training and consultancy on designing/preparing CLIL materials. They also perceive that they need to familiarize themselves with alternative ways of brainstorming and assessment through computers.

Having reached the end of this RPLTL special issue on CLIL, including two volumes, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to all contributors. As argued at the beginning of this issue, CLIL has emerged as a major innovative approach to learning since mid-nineties and can have a significant future in both European and Greek educational context with remarkable results. We believe that the contents of this RPLTL special issue, in both volumes, advocate for this assertion, send strong messages to policymakers in education, highlight the need for teacher training and raise, at the same time, important questions about the limits CLIL needs to have in manifesting itself. We hope that this RPLTL special issue on CLIL becomes an inspiration to all, who want to strengthen schools as spaces of meaningful and purposeful learning to effectively meet the 21st century challenges.

Eleni Griva (egriva@uowm.gr & egriva.efl@gmail.com) is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Department of Primary Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece. She is also the coordinator of the "Testing and Assessment in Language Learning" module of the M.Ed, in TESOL of the School of Humanities of the HOU. Her research interests include: L2/FL Learning and Teaching, Language Learning Strategies, Bilingualism/Multilingualism, Methods and Materials in Bilingual/SL Education, Teaching Greek as a L2/FL, Assessment in Language Learning.

Angeliki Deligianni-Georgakas (ade@gecon.gr) is a tutor-counselor in the TEYL module at HOU's M.Ed. in TESOL program. She holds an EdD degree from Exeter University, UK in TESOL and a Masters degree from AUTH in Pedagogy. She has worked in the post of EFL School Advisor and taught at Aristotle University. She has also served on the post of Education Counselor at the Greek Embassy in London and cooperated with Hellenic Pedagogical Institute and Council of Europe on a number of EFL projects. Her interest areas include: Metacognitive Strategies Awareness in Language Learning, CLIL, Multi/Plurilingualism, Alternative Assessment.
